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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2100 (2013), by which the Council established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

2. In the resolution, the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed of the situation in Mali and the implementation of the mandate of MINUSMA. In particular, the Council asked me to report every three months, from 1 July 2013, with updates on the security situation, the priority political elements of the transitional road map and the electoral process, as well as relevant information on the progress, promotion and protection of human rights and international humanitarian law. In addition, I was asked to include in my reports a review of troop levels, force generation and deployment of all constituent elements of MINUSMA. The present report covers the period from 10 June to 29 September 2013 and updates the information provided in my previous report.

II. Political process

3. During the reporting period, important steps were taken towards the implementation of the transitional road map and its two main objectives: the re-establishment of territorial integrity and the organization of transparent and credible elections. While many of the tasks envisaged under the road map have yet to be implemented, the mandate of the transitional Government came to an end on 4 September, when, following a peaceful presidential election conducted nationwide on 28 July and 11 August, Boubacar Keita was sworn in as the new President of Mali. On 5 September, Oumar Tatam Ly was appointed Prime Minister. The composition of a new 34-member Government was announced on 8 September. It includes a newly established Ministry for Reconciliation and Development of the Northern Regions. On 18 September, the Malian authorities announced that parliamentary elections would be held on 24 November.

4. On 18 June, in Ouagadougou, the transitional Government and the armed groups in the northern regions of Mali signed a preliminary agreement to hold the presidential election and inclusive peace talks in Mali. This followed weeks of intensive diplomatic efforts, including by my Special Representative, in support of the mediation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led

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by the President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré. The armed group signatories included the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) and the Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA). The Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA) and the Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance, which witnessed the negotiations, officially adhered to the agreement on the same day. My Special Representative signed the agreement as a witness on behalf of the United Nations.

5. The preliminary agreement paved the way for the holding of a presidential election nationwide, including in the Kidal region, to be followed by inclusive discussions, commencing 60 days after the establishment of the new Government, on a comprehensive peace settlement. It provided, inter alia, modalities for the cessation of hostilities, the cantonment of armed groups and the gradual return of the Malian Defence and Security Forces to the Kidal region. It also provided for the establishment of an international commission of inquiry to investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, sex crimes, drug trafficking and other serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law throughout Mali.

6. The preliminary agreement provided for follow-up mechanisms, in particular the Mixed Technical Commission on Security, responsible for monitoring the cessation of hostilities and the ceasefire, and the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, responsible for monitoring and supporting the implementation of the preliminary agreement, including resource mobilization. Those mechanisms are chaired by MINUSMA and involve the signatories and adherents to the agreement, as well as regional and international partners.

7. With facilitation by the Mixed Technical Commission on Security, the implementation of the preliminary agreement began immediately upon its signature, with a focus on the modalities for the first phase of the cantonment of armed group elements and the return of the Malian armed forces and State administration to Kidal. As agreed by the Mixed Technical Commission on Security on 2 July and following the deployment of MINUSMA in Kidal, 200 Malian armed forces personnel entered the town on 5 July, together with the Governor and other State and election administration officials. Three cantonment sites, two in Kidal town and one on the periphery, were designated for MNLA and HCUA. Approximately 800 combatants were regrouped at those sites, where they remain. Following their deployment in Kidal town, the Malian armed forces also deployed in Aguelhok and Tessalit, on 26 July.

8. The implementation of the preliminary agreement was also supported at the political level by the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, which is chaired by my Special Representative. At its first meeting, on 22 July, the Committee established a working group on logistical and financial support for the cantonment of armed groups and decided to review lessons learned from the implementation of previous peace agreements in Mali. In a joint declaration following the meeting, the parties called for the conduct of a peaceful presidential election and the implementation of confidence-building measures. Following intensive diplomatic efforts by my Special Representative and with the support of the international community, the Government released, on 7 August, two MNLA prisoners in accordance with the preliminary agreement. Eight additional prisoners were released on 16 August, and a further three on 21 August. On 26 September, however, MNLA, HCUA and MAA announced that they were suspending their participation in the implementation mechanisms

established under the preliminary agreement, claiming that the Government had not complied with its obligations.

9. On 6 August, the Government of Mauritania facilitated a meeting between MNLA, HCUA and MAA leaders in Nouakchott. Following the meeting, the three groups issued a joint statement calling for the cessation of inter-group attacks and for collaboration among them to ensure the security of the northern regions.

10. As part of the effort to increase public understanding and support for the preliminary agreement, from 1 to 3 July, MINUSMA held several consultative meetings with more than 150 women in Kidal town to discuss the role and contribution of women in implementing the agreement. The participants expressed diverse views, with some calling for a boycott of the elections and the independence of "Azawad", while others called for voters to participate in the election as a prelude to dialogue with elected Malian authorities.

11. In a separate development, the leader of the coup d'état in March 2012, Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General by the transitional Government on 14 August. Colonel Moussa Sinko Coulibaly, Minister of Territorial Administration during the transition, and Colonel Didier Dacko, who commanded military operations in the north, were both promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. The decree appointing Lieutenant General Sanogo as Head of the military committee to monitor the reform of defence and security forces was abrogated on 28 August.

A. Dialogue and reconciliation

12. Dialogue and reconciliation activities remained limited during the reporting period. Following the first meeting of the new Government, on 9 September, President Keita announced the launch of the Assises du nord, which would discuss sustainable peace in northern Mali. On 15 September, the Minister of Reconciliation and Development of the Northern Regions, the Minister of Security and the Minister of Territorial Administration visited Kidal, where they met with local leaders to discuss issues related to peace and reconciliation.

13. MINUSMA continued to interact with the National Commission for Dialogue and Reconciliation with a view to determining how best to support its activities and to link those activities with the work of the bodies established under the preliminary agreement. It was agreed that MINUSMA would provide technical support to help the Commission design the dialogue process. Meanwhile, the Commission continued to explain its mandate through outreach activities with community leaders in Bamako district and northern Mali, including in Kidal.

B. Elections

14. The successful conduct of the two rounds of the presidential election on 28 July and 11 August was a significant step towards the full restoration of constitutional order in Mali. Despite the constraints imposed by a compressed electoral timetable, a volatile security situation and the simultaneous redeployment of the administration in the northern regions, the polls were a remarkable achievement. Some 48 per cent (3,345,253) of the registered voters participated in the process, the highest turnout

since 2002, in generally calm conditions with no significant security incidents reported. Through MINUSMA and the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations provided technical, financial, political and security support before, during and after the polling.

15. Extensive efforts for the registration of voters and the distribution of voter cards took place in challenging circumstances. The biometric electoral roll taken from the census (*recensement administratif à vocation d'état civil*) closed on 31 March. A total of 6,829,696 voters were identified, almost equally divided between men and women. From 5 to 27 June (and until 11 July in Kidal), the provisional electoral lists were verified nationwide and outside of Mali. The distribution of national identification cards, which also served as voter cards, started on 28 June nationwide and on 12 July in Kidal. Around 85 per cent of the cards had been distributed prior to the polls. The Government undertook considerable efforts to ensure the participation of all potential voters. Despite efforts to facilitate and organize the participation of refugees, however, very few voter cards were distributed in the refugee camps in Burkina Faso, the Niger and Mauritania, resulting in a very low rate of participation among those populations.

16. On 4 July, the Constitutional Court validated 28 candidates (including 1 woman) for the presidential election. One candidate subsequently withdrew, alleging irregularities in the preparation of the polls. The campaign was conducted peacefully from 7 to 26 July, and most candidates abided by the electoral code of conduct. While candidates were able to travel freely nationwide, only three visited Kidal.

17. Most polling stations opened and closed on 28 July at the times stipulated by the electoral law. Access was generally unhindered and voters were able to cast ballots, although incidents of voter intimidation were reported in the Kidal region and Ménaka. Many voters encountered problems in identifying their polling stations in the first round, but the process went much more smoothly during the second. Overall, national and international observers deemed the process free, transparent and credible. Eleven complaints were filed with the Constitutional Court following the first round, all of which were dismissed.

18. On 7 August, the Constitutional Court announced the final results of the first round of the presidential election. Mr. Keita obtained 39.8 per cent and Soumaila Cissé 19.7 per cent of the vote; since neither candidate had won over 50 per cent, a second round was conducted on 11 August. On 12 August, my Special Representative engaged both candidates as part of efforts to prevent any tensions that could lead to a post-electoral crisis. On that date, Mr. Cissé graciously conceded the election and visited Mr. Keita to extend his congratulations. On 20 August, the Constitutional Court announced the final results of the second round, confirming that Mr. Keita had been elected with 77.6 per cent of the vote.

19. Throughout the electoral period, my Special Representative met various stakeholders, including candidates, political parties, civil society leaders and youth groups, in Bamako to help create the best possible conditions for holding the election and preventing election-related violence. Other actors also played a significant role in promoting peaceful elections, including the women's group Plate forme de veille des femmes pour des élections sans violence et équitables au Mali, established with United Nations support to help ensure the electoral mobilization of women and youth and the prevention of post-electoral violence.

20. MINUSMA also played an active role in electoral security during the election period. From 27 July, joint MINUSMA and Malian police patrols were carried out in Bamako, Timbuktu, Gao, Mopti and Kidal. While the Malian police retained the lead role, this support was highly appreciated and was also provided during the second round of elections, on 11 August.

III. Security and stabilization

21. During the period under review, the overall security situation remained relatively stable but fragile, as illustrated by isolated clashes between armed groups in the northern regions, continuing tensions in the Kidal region, incidents of inter-communal violence in some areas and the persistent threat of asymmetric attacks by armed groups.

22. In the weeks prior to the signing of the preliminary agreement on 18 June, the Malian armed forces launched an offensive against MNLA positions in Anefis (approximately 115 km south of Kidal town) during which the Malian armed forces took control and consolidated its positions in the area, while MNLA strengthened its position in and around Kidal town. The parties maintained their positions until the agreement was signed, which paved the way for the deployment of a company of the armed forces to Kidal town and the assumption of responsibility by the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) (and subsequently MINUSMA) for the checkpoints controlling access to Kidal town.

23. The ceasefire between MNLA and HCUA and the Malian Government was generally respected during the reporting period, although tensions flared towards the end of September. Both parties violated the ceasefire through the uncoordinated movement of troops in the Kidal region. One incident of indirect fire between MNLA and the Malian armed forces occurred in Aguelhok on 15 August, which was quickly contained following an intervention by MINUSMA. On 11 September, violent clashes were reported between the armed forces and MNLA in Foita, 15 km south-west of Léré, close to the Mauritanian border, during which three armed forces personnel were injured. Nine MNLA personnel were arrested. On 27 September, a grenade was thrown at a bank being guarded by Malian forces in Kidal. On 29 and 30 September, the two forces exchanged fire in the centre of Kidal town.

24. The role of MINUSMA in providing security in Kidal includes maintaining checkpoints, conducting patrols and contributing to the de-escalation of tension. Upon the rehatting of the AFISMA troops as MINUSMA forces on 1 July, MINUSMA took control of checkpoints around Kidal town in accordance with the preliminary agreement. On 6 July, one of the MINUSMA checkpoints in Kidal town was attacked by unidentified armed elements during which a Beninese peacekeeper was wounded. On 8 July, MINUSMA deployed a tactical command post comprising two quick-reaction force companies in Kidal. A MINUSMA formed police unit was also deployed. MINUSMA later positioned an additional company in Aguelhok ahead of the deployment of the Malian armed forces to the town.

25. Although tensions have persisted in Kidal town, the election took place in a generally peaceful atmosphere. After the Malian armed forces began conducting patrols on its own in Kidal on 13 July, tensions flared with the community and the armed groups. On 18 July, MNLA and Malian Government supporters clashed in Kidal town. In the ensuing violence, one pro-Government demonstrator was killed

and the market was looted. Operation Serval, led by France, and MINUSMA deployed forces to control the situation. From 18 to 20 July, six election officials were abducted by an alleged representative of MNLA in Tessalit, but they were released on 21 July.

26. In Gao, the presence of armed MNLA elements disrupted the conduct of the polling in Telatai (250 km north of Ansongo) and in Alata commune, near Tidermene (150 km north of Ménaka). As a result, only two people voted in each locality.

27. Activities by extremist armed groups diminished following the military operations conducted by Operation Serval and the Malian armed forces in early 2013, and no major incidents were reported during the electoral period despite public threats by the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'ouest to carry out disruptive action. There were, however, increased reports of activities by armed groups in the Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal regions as well as in neighbouring countries during the reporting period, including an asymmetric attack on a Malian military camp in Timbuktu on 29 September and the discovery of explosives. Those activities could be linked to attempts by those groups, some of which are reorganizing internally, to engage in trafficking or to evade Malian and international military forces. On 22 August, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'ouest announced that it had merged with a breakaway cell of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, to form a new group, Al-Mourabitoune. Some military reports also indicate that some armed groups, including Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, have been recruiting among local populations north of Timbuktu. On 20 August, a MINUSMA detachment was attacked by unidentified assailants at the Tassiga bridge, south of Ansongo. Since then, armed elements have been sighted frequently across the northern regions. On 7 September, a Serval patrol discovered a training base near Anefis that appeared to have been abandoned hastily by its occupants. Ammunition, medical equipment and other military items were collected. On 14 September, a Serval patrol came under fire from unidentified armed elements south of Anefis. On 29 September, a vehicle-borne explosive device was detonated at the entrance of a Malian military camp in Timbuktu in an attack that Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb subsequently claimed to have carried out. In addition to the occupants of the vehicle, the explosion killed two civilians and injured several other civilians and soldiers.

28. The security situation in some areas in the north was marked by sporadic clashes between armed groups or incidents of inter-communal violence. On 15 and 19 July, clashes between MAA and MNLA took place in Lerneb, west of Timbuktu town, and near Lake Faguibine, north of Timbuktu town. This coincided with threats of MAA attacks on In-Khalil, close to the Algerian border in the Kidal region, from their position in In-Afarak. On 13 August, fighting erupted between Arab and Tuareg groups in Bordj El Mokhtar in southern Algeria, near the border with Mali. Those clashes were reported to have resulted in a dozen deaths. On 14 August, clashes took place in In-Khalil, reportedly in connection with the incidents in Bordj El Mokhtar.

29. The frequency of violent inter-ethnic clashes has increased between and against members of the Arab, Tuareg and Peuhl communities, notably in Timbuktu and north of Kidal. On 12 August, in Léré, south-west of Timbuktu, a man was killed by a mob for his alleged links with extremist armed groups.

30. The threat of improvised explosive devices remained high, with eight incidents reported since 1 July, including the attack in Timbuktu on 29 September and another on 22 July in which two French soldiers were wounded by a remote-controlled device south of Bourem. Since March 2012, there have been 53 confirmed casualties (31 killed and 22 injured) from such attacks. Explosives or materials required to manufacture them continued to be discovered, including the discovery in early September of a vehicle containing approximately 1 ton of explosives and detonators south-west of Anefis.

31. With the support of the Mine Action Service, 650 items of unexploded ordnance had been cleared in northern Mali since 1 April. Much work remains to be done, however, to ensure that conflict-affected areas are free from threats of explosive ordnance. Through the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations has confirmed that 80 people have been victims of explosive remnants of war, including 11 killed and 69 injured, with half of the victims being children. The Mine Action Service has continued to support MINUSMA in providing awareness training to the Malian armed forces, humanitarian actors and United Nations personnel on threats from explosive remnants of war, landmines and improvised explosive devices. Nine teams from international mine action operators have been deployed in conflict-affected areas to assist in conducting surveys and disposing of explosive ordnance.

IV. Re-establishment of State authority

32. The transitional Government has worked to facilitate the return of local administrators, such as prefects and sub-prefects, to Gao, Timbuktu, Mopti and, more recently, Kidal. However, while some mayors continued to carry out limited functions during the occupation of the north by armed groups, State authority in the north has been severely affected by the crisis, and the return and functioning of State authorities is still at an early stage. A significant number of State officials have yet to return to their positions or cannot function owing to lack of security, the destruction of infrastructure and inadequate equipment.

A. Security sector reform

33. The European Union Training Mission in Mali, which comprises some 540 personnel, continued to support defence sector reform through the training of a second battalion at a training camp in Koulikoro. With the establishment of the new Government, MINUSMA expects an increased focus by national authorities and their partners on the reorganization of the Malian armed forces as envisaged under the preliminary agreement.

B. Law enforcement, justice and corrections institutions

34. The redeployment of judicial authorities to the northern regions has made very limited progress. Access to the formal justice system is challenging for most Malians given the lack of judicial institutions and the distances involved in reaching them. On 17 July, the transitional Government announced that temporary measures would be implemented to ensure the return of financial and justice institutions,

while the refurbishment and reconstruction of damaged buildings is ongoing. A number of joint Government, MINUSMA and international community missions were sent to Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu to assess conditions for the return of the judicial administration to those areas, including an evaluation of needs for the reopening of prisons. On 30 August, a prosecutor was deployed to Gao and has resumed his duties at the regional court. The return of the prison administration to the north is equally problematic. Project proposals are being developed in collaboration with several non-governmental organizations to facilitate the restoration of the prison system.

35. The presence of the Malian police, gendarmerie and national guard in the north remains very limited, but efforts to increase their numbers continue. As at 16 September, 175 police officers, 300 gendarmes and 230 national guards had been deployed to northern towns.

V. Human rights protection

A. Human rights

36. Since the signature of the preliminary agreement on 18 June, the number of allegations of grave violations of human rights has decreased markedly. The human rights situation remains fragile, however, with reports of violations and abuses allegedly committed by the Malian Defence and Security Forces and armed groups, including the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad, the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad and the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'ouest, as well as pro-Government militias such as Ganda Izo and Ganda Koy. On 26 June, in Gossi, Gao region, two civilians of Tuareg origin were allegedly executed by elements of Ganda Izo after being released by the Malian armed forces.

37. No major human rights violations were reported in relation to the election. The United Nations monitored the human rights situation in the context of electoral activities, particularly public gatherings and demonstrations. In this context, mobile teams were deployed in Bamako and surrounding districts as well as in the Sikasso, Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal regions.

38. The detention conditions of individuals held in relation to the conflict in the northern regions remains of concern and is subject to monitoring by United Nations human rights teams. In Bamako, despite the release of some detainees for lack of evidence, as at 17 September more than 200 individuals reportedly remained in detention pending trial, in poor conditions and with inadequate medical care. Eight detainees are also being held in Gao. Following the clashes between the Malian armed forces and MNLA in Foita on 11 September, 11 individuals were arrested in the Timbuktu region and transferred to Bamako, in addition to 9 others transferred on 14 September to Bamako. In addition, 30 individuals, including 5 children allegedly associated with armed groups, are being illegally held in the MNLA-run detention facility in Kidal (see also para. 47).

39. In terms of capacity-building, the United Nations provided training on human rights and elections to more than 1,500 police, gendarmerie, national guard and civil protection personnel in Bamako, Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Segou, and Mopti.

Furthermore, the United Nations, in collaboration with the European Union Training Mission, trained 1,300 elements of the Malian armed forces on human rights, the protection of women and children and international humanitarian law prior to their deployment to the northern regions.

40. Throughout the reporting period, MINUSMA has continued to implement the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces in relation to support for AFISMA contingents prior to their rehatting as MINUSMA forces, as well as to the Malian armed forces. MINUSMA also continued to disseminate the policy to relevant national and regional partners, including the Malian armed forces, to help ensure the effective implementation of the policy in Mali.

B. Protection of civilians

41. Although the capabilities of extremist armed groups appear to have been reduced, asymmetric attacks against the civilian population remain a continuing possibility. The United Nations continued to assess risks to the civilian population to inform the development of a strategy for the protection of civilians. This drew on field visits to the northern regions, including to Gao and Timbuktu. The United Nations also continued to monitor the risk of intimidation of the population by armed groups throughout the northern regions. Furthermore, the relationship among and between communities in some parts of the northern regions remains tense, particularly among and between the Arab, Tuareg, Peuhl and Songhai communities. MINUSMA continued to engage community leaders with a view to reducing tension in that regard.

42. Returning refugees and internally displaced persons, faced with the daunting task of rebuilding their lives while at times facing accusations of collaboration with armed groups in the northern regions, appear to be particularly at risk of revenge attacks. On 21 July, local authorities prevented a demonstration by local militia elements known as the Jeunes patriotes against the return of persons of Arab descent to Dire. The continued existence of "self-defence" militias, some of which have a record of violence against civilians of specific ethnicities and a stated objective of acquiring weapons for self-defence purposes, may pose a risk to the population as a whole and to returnees in particular, especially those belonging to certain minority groups.

C. Conflict-related sexual violence

43. Allegations of sexual violence have declined significantly since 2012. However, incidents of sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups continued to be reported in the northern regions and particularly in Gao and around the town. The United Nations and its partners have established regional coordination committees on gender-based violence and provided kits for the treatment of 7,000 cases of rape and 3,750 dignity kits to displaced persons.

44. The United Nations has engaged with the parties listed in my 2012 report on conflict-related sexual violence (A/66/657-S/2012/33) as being responsible for carrying out such acts, including MNLA and HCUA, to inform them about their inclusion on the list and to discuss the actions required to prevent and respond to

conflict-related sexual violence. Training and sensitization activities were also conducted with the Malian armed forces and other protection actors, including AFISMA (and subsequently MINUSMA) personnel, in order to create the capacity to prevent and respond to cases of conflict-related sexual violence. Many victims and civil society organizations have nonetheless expressed frustration about the lack of prosecutions in cases of sexual violence crimes.

D. Child protection

45. Child protection remains a serious concern. Grave violations committed against children continue to be reported, particularly in the northern regions, where some children remain associated with armed groups including "self-defence" militias. According to partner organizations, children formerly associated with armed groups continued to return spontaneously to their homes and communities. In some cases, families had facilitated the recruitment into armed groups of their own children through religious and local community leaders in the hope that they would receive religious education and that, when needed, the families would be protected against attacks by armed group elements. Some families reported cases of missing children, while others indicated that they did not want their children to be identified for fear of reprisal. Armed groups allegedly perpetrated rape and other incidents of grave sexual violence against children. Cases of the recruitment and use of children, as well as of killing and maiming, have been recorded, including the killing of eight children in incidents involving explosive remnants of war. In addition, there are continuing concerns about the arbitrary detention of children on security charges by the gendarmerie and other components of the Malian armed forces.

46. The mainstreaming of child protection and the full implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism established under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) has continued since the establishment of MINUSMA. The United Nations and international non-governmental organizations have established a country monitoring and reporting task force to lay the foundation for the establishment of the mechanism.

47. A protocol for the release, transfer and protection of children associated with armed forces and groups was signed on 1 July by the Government and my Special Representative. It provides a legal framework for the release and reintegration of those children. In this context, negotiations between MNLA and the United Nations led to the release of three out of eight children formerly associated with armed groups and detained in an MNLA jail in Kidal. The released children were sent to a UNICEF-supported transit centre for psychosocial care and reintegration. Advocacy is ongoing for the release of the remaining five children. Following advocacy and follow-up, five children were also released from the Central Prison of Bamako on 16 August.

VI. Early recovery and development

48. The delivery of basic social services such as water, health care, education and protection remains limited in the northern regions because of the slow return of civil service personnel and the continued need for the rehabilitation of infrastructure. Approximately 65 per cent of health centres in conflict-affected areas are either

non-functional or only partially functional and about half of the schools remain closed.

49. In 2013 the rate of growth of the Malian economy is expected to reach 4.8 per cent, supported by the dynamism of the agricultural and gold-mining sectors as well as the resumption of international aid. The Government has also generated additional domestic revenue with the sale of the third mobile telephone licence. Substantial expenditure has occurred under the revised finance law to accommodate extraordinary requirements, with additional provisions made for the presidential and legislative elections and the redeployment of the administration to the northern regions.

50. The United Nations is developing an early recovery action plan to assist the Government in providing a rapid response to the post-crisis development challenges in northern Mali. The gradual return of the administration presents an opportunity to focus international assistance on reconstruction and development, beyond relief activities. It is expected that the implementation of early recovery programmes will address deficiencies in the delivery of essential services and support the authorities in stimulating the economy while promoting the creation of conditions for the safe return of displaced persons to their communities. The United Nations has also continued to support the restoration of social services in the northern regions, including by supporting health centres and nutritional units, vaccination campaigns, the repair of water distribution networks and the reopening of schools.

51. The United Nations has continued its assessment of historical and cultural heritage sites in Timbuktu and Gao with a view to their rehabilitation. Priority actions have been identified to safeguard the ancient manuscripts of Timbuktu. Work currently under way includes the annual replastering of the Djingareyber mosque in Timbuktu and an architectural survey of all the destroyed mausoleum sites. Through the efforts of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations has developed training modules for military, police and civilian personnel on their responsibilities and duties with regard to the protection of the cultural heritage of Mali. The mine action service has also cooperated with United Nations partners in securing World Heritage Sites in Mali.

VII. Humanitarian situation

52. While a large number of Malians remain displaced by the conflict, the significant increase in returns has been encouraging. An estimated 509,000 people were forced to leave their homes because of the conflict in the north and sought shelter in central or southern Mali or in neighbouring countries. As at 16 September, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported a total of 171,000 Malian refugees in neighbouring countries and continued to undertake more detailed registration to generate precise data. As at 29 August, the Commission on Population Movements estimated that there were 333,000 internally displaced persons in Mali, the majority of whom live with family or friends in precarious conditions, relying on humanitarian aid and the solidarity of host communities that were already under considerable strain before the conflict started. Meanwhile, heavy flooding in Bamako in late August led to at least 34 deaths, and many others were injured or remain missing.

53. A continuing trend of spontaneous returns to northern Mali was noted during the reporting period. The International Organization for Migration estimates that as at mid-September, about 137,000 people had returned to their areas of origin in the Timbuktu and Gao regions. Efforts are under way to collect additional data to confirm returnee numbers and profiles in order to ensure appropriate responses to their immediate and future needs.

54. Conditions for the active promotion of the voluntary return of displaced populations with security and dignity have yet to be achieved in the northern regions. However, in view of the spontaneous occurrence of returns, humanitarian organizations have mobilized to provide basic material assistance to vulnerable populations in the areas of return in the context of the early recovery action plan (see para. 50).

55. Important needs remain to be covered in all sectors. At least 3.5 million Malians suffer from food insecurity, including 1.4 million who require immediate assistance. The situation is of particular concern in northern Mali, where an estimated 1.35 million people are affected by food insecurity, according to an emergency food security assessment conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme and their partners in August. Humanitarian access in the northern regions has improved but remains restricted in rural areas and in the Kidal region owing to the prevailing insecurity. Insecurity also continues to affect the economic systems and the livelihoods of the population, for example by limiting access to foodstuffs and agricultural inputs or by contributing to the loss of cattle and employment. The most vulnerable people have resorted to negative coping strategies, such as consuming or selling off seeds and other assets, thereby further eroding their resilience. The first nutritional survey carried out in conflict-affected areas since 2011 revealed a serious nutritional situation in the Gao region, in which the global acute malnutrition rate among children under 5 was 13.5 per cent. Overall, an estimated 660,000 children under 5 are at risk of malnutrition, including 210,000 who are suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Efforts by the United Nations to treat malnutrition and to provide assistance in the areas of health care, water and sanitation continue.

56. In July, the consolidated appeal process for Mali was revised upward to take into account the new needs identified by humanitarian partners after the military intervention at the beginning of 2013. As at 16 September, the 2013 consolidated appeal process for Mali had raised only $176 million (37 per cent) of the $477 million required. Additional resources are urgently needed in order to address the basic needs of millions of Malians who currently depend on humanitarian assistance for their survival and protection.

VIII. Establishment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

57. Although MINUSMA is one of the most logistically challenging missions the United Nations has ever launched, encouraging progress towards its establishment has been achieved during the reporting period. This has included efforts to help MINUSMA contingents rehatted from AFISMA reach United Nations standards for personnel and equipment, as well as progress with the establishment of a mission headquarters in Bamako and presences at the regional level in Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal

and Mopti. Nonetheless, significant gaps still need to be filled in the authorized military and police strength of MINUSMA. The recruitment and deployment of civilian staff is ongoing.

A. Deployment of civilian, military and police personnel

58. On 1 July, MINUSMA, which until that date had focused on the civilian tasks transferred from the United Nations Office in Mali on 25 April, assumed responsibility for military and police personnel deployed under AFISMA following the transfer of authority. Following a ceremony in Bamako on that date, 6,103 military personnel, 20 individual police officers and 3 formed police units comprising 368 officers were rehatted and started receiving full support from MINUSMA at United Nations standards. An assessment of deployed contingent-owned equipment was conducted in August and September to identify critical shortfalls. The military contingents and formed police units have been given a grace period, ending 31 October, to reach United Nations standards in terms of contingent-owned equipment and personnel.

59. Prior to the rehatting, MINUSMA screened contingents to ensure their full compliance with United Nations human rights standards. Human rights screening will continue for all incoming contingents.

60. As at 16 September, MINUSMA troop strength stood at 5,208 following the withdrawal of one infantry battalion by a troop-contributing country. MINUSMA has five infantry battalions deployed in most key areas, including Tessalit, Aguelhok, Kidal, Gao, Ménaka and Ansongo in Sector East, and Gossi, Douentza, Sévaré, Timbuktu, Goundam and Diabaly in Sector West. A transport company from Côte d'Ivoire and an engineer construction company from Ghana are deployed in Bamako. In addition, a level-II hospital from Togo is deployed in Sévaré and a combat engineer company from Senegal is deployed in Gao.

61. Capabilities that still need to be generated in order for MINUSMA to reach its authorized strength include two infantry battalions, an airfield engineer company for the rehabilitation of the airstrips in Tessalit and Kidal, an information operations unit and a special forces company. Critical shortfalls also remain in military utility and armed helicopters. The achievement of the full operational capability required by the military component to perform all mandated tasks is expected to be delayed until additional enabling capabilities are generated.

62. As at 17 September, the MINUSMA police component comprised 56 individual police officers, 5 formed police units comprising 743 personnel and members of the standing police capacity. A total of 34 individual police officers are present in Bamako, while 22 are deployed in the northern regions. Two formed police units are deployed in Bamako and one each in Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal.

63. The Mission continued to strengthen its civilian presence in the Bamako, Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal regions, with a civilian staffing of 287 on the ground as at 17 September. The three regional offices in Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal initiated operations, with civilian and uniformed personnel deploying progressively. The MINUSMA civilian component is focusing on supporting the political process, including negotiations with armed groups and preparations for the inclusive national dialogue process, as well as on the human rights, civilian protection, justice,

corrections, gender and child protection aspects of the mandate, as well as the wide range of support tasks required during the start-up phase of the Mission.

64. In order to raise awareness among the Malian population on the mandate and establishment of the Mission, MINUSMA has conducted an outreach campaign focused on promoting peaceful and credible elections and inclusive dialogue, as well as explaining the transition of AFISMA troops to MINUSMA. The Mission's leadership has engaged extensively with local media, especially radio stations, and conducted outreach visits to the north of the country to build confidence.

B. Support challenges

65. The transition of AFISMA troops to MINUSMA contingents on 1 July significantly increased the support requirements to be met by the Mission, particularly in terms of life support and other logistical needs, including food, water and fuel. The harsh operating environment, the large distances between population centres and the poor state of infrastructure place major constraints on operations in northern Mali and make MINUSMA heavily dependent on air assets. As a result, the generation of a rotary aviation fleet and capabilities for the management of airfield services and airport and runway rehabilitation, repair and maintenance in the north remain top priorities. Those capabilities are vital for the deployment of personnel, equipment and infrastructure, as well as for the sustainment and operations of the troops and the police and civilian components of the Mission.

66. A total of $44 million has been pledged or received for the Trust Fund in Support of AFISMA. Of that amount, $6 million is earmarked for and committed to humanitarian mine action. An initial shipment of equipment valued at $14 million has been sent to Mali and is being allocated to contingents that transitioned from AFISMA. A balance of $24 million is currently available to support the transitioned contingents and will be used to provide additional equipment and maintenance. The transitioned contingents were asked to meet United Nations standards for equipment and capability by 31 October 2013. Additional bilateral donations and equipment provided through the Trust Fund will complement the troop- and police-contributing countries' efforts to strengthen their capacity to undertake mandated activities.

67. The Trust Fund in Support of Peace and Security in Mali has received $7 million in mostly non-earmarked contributions, with a further $4.5 million expected to be received shortly. Funding has been used to support the cantonment of armed groups in Kidal. Equipment valued at $700,000 has been shipped to Kidal to support the establishment of three cantonment sites, including tents and generators. A pilot project to provide immediate life-support needs (food, water and fuel) and minor infrastructure renovations is being implemented in those sites for an initial two-month period at an estimated cost of $900,000.

C. Safety and security

68. Armed groups and crime pose the main threats to United Nations personnel in Mali. In order to enable programme delivery and ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel, premises and assets in the country, 75 security officers are deployed in Bamako, Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal. The United Nations security team in Mali is continuously conducting assessments of transportation routes and specific geographical areas to identify and address emerging security

threats. The team has reinforced security measures at the entrance to all United Nations premises and has recommended special residential and office security measures, including safe rooms, for all United Nations personnel. In addition, under the minimum operating security standards, personal protection equipment and other security equipment and armoured vehicles are required.

IX. International coordination

69. On 1 July, the Support and Follow-up Group on the Situation in Mali, which is chaired jointly by the African Union, ECOWAS and the United Nations, held its fifth meeting, in Bamako. The participants welcomed the signing of the preliminary agreement and stressed the need for continued international support for national efforts towards peace consolidation. They also encouraged the authorities to create an environment conducive to the holding of credible elections.

70. My Special Representative has continuously engaged with the diplomatic community to develop common messages and approaches to support the holding of peaceful and transparent elections. On 29 July, my Special Representative chaired a meeting to discuss the first round of elections with the heads of election observation missions, including those mandated by the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie, ECOWAS and the European Union. The participants agreed that the polls had been held in accordance with recognized international electoral standards.

71. My Special Representative began visits to countries neighbouring Mali to discuss issues of common concern, including security challenges. In this respect, he travelled to the Niger on 3 July, attended the forty-third ordinary session of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in Abuja on 17 and 18 July and travelled to Mauritania on 4 and 5 August to meet with the President, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. He also travelled to Algiers and N'Djamena on 9 and 11 September, respectively.

72. At the operational level, MINUSMA continued to liaise closely with Operation Serval, including by exchanging information. A technical agreement was signed on 1 July between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the French Ministry of Defence on "in extremis" support to be provided by Operation Serval to MINUSMA. Liaison arrangements have also been established with the European Union Training Mission.

X. Observations

73. The successful conduct of the presidential election, including in the northern regions, where the security situation had been precarious, is a remarkable achievement for which I commend the transitional authorities and the Malian people. The election is, however, only the first step on the long road towards the restoration of peace and stability in Mali. It provides an opportunity for Malians to engage in genuine national dialogue on the challenges facing their country and to collectively agree on the way forward to address the root causes of the crisis. I encourage all Malian actors, including northern communities and armed groups, to seize the moment and launch an inclusive national dialogue as soon as possible in

accordance with the transitional road map and the preliminary agreement to hold a presidential election and inclusive peace talks in Mali.

74. The signing of the preliminary agreement marked a vital step in the country's transition towards the full restoration of constitutional order and territorial integrity. In this regard, I commend the parties for their commitment and determination to peacefully resolve the crisis. I welcome the efforts by the ECOWAS Mediator, in close collaboration with the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and key bilateral partners, which were critical to ensuring the success of the negotiations leading to the signing of the agreement.

75. The task of fully implementing the preliminary agreement rests primarily with its signatories and adherents, particularly the Government and the armed groups. The insecurity and persisting tensions in some areas of the northern regions, particularly in Kidal, remains a concern. I urge the parties to the agreement to desist from acts that could jeopardize the gains achieved so far. I call upon them to continue to refrain from acts of provocation and violence and to work together towards national reconciliation. The sustained engagement of the international community is crucial. In that regard, I congratulate both the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee and the Mixed Technical Commission on Security for progress made thus far in implementing the provisions of the ceasefire agreement, which includes the establishment of cantonment sites and the release of some prisoners as part of confidence-building measures. I urge MNLA, HCUA and MAA to resume their participation in those important mechanisms.

76. It will be also vitally important to forge genuine political consensus on the organization of the upcoming parliamentary and local elections, and I would urge the authorities and political parties to maintain their focus on this key challenge. In this regard, I call upon the authorities to ensure that outstanding technical issues are addressed in an inclusive manner to allow for the timely holding of those polls.

77. The launch of the activities of the Dialogue and Reconciliation Commission is a sign of commitment by the Malian authorities to begin to address the root causes of the crisis. I encourage the authorities to reflect further on its mandate and composition in order to ensure the full support of all communities for its work. The international community should continue and strengthen its support for the efforts of the Malian people to foster dialogue and reconciliation.

78. The deployment of the local administration, Malian security and defence forces and MINUSMA, along with the presence of the French forces, has helped improve the security situation in the major northern towns. Insecurity, in particular clashes between Tuareg and Arab groups and the continued presence of armed groups, remains a serious concern, however. While the operational capabilities of the armed groups have been reduced, the attack on the Malian military camp in Timbuktu on 29 September and the discovery on 27 and 29 July of improvised explosive devices near Aguelhok have shown that they retain the capability to pose a significant threat. I encourage the Malian authorities and their partners to remain vigilant. I also call upon international partners to increase their support to the Malian forces to ensure that national capacity to proactively address the continued threat posed by extremist armed groups is built up.

79. I wish to commend the French forces for their vital contribution to the major combat operations against armed groups in early 2013. Their role, including in

support of the Malian forces, remains crucial. As the French forces begin their drawdown and MINUSMA builds up its capacity, it is important that the gains made thus far be consolidated. In this regard, it will be critical to bridge the Mission's gaps in terms of military and police capacities. I reiterate my request for support from all Member States, including the provision of rotary-wing aircraft for the generation of key enablers, as well as for the provision of support to help MINUSMA contingents meet United Nations standards by the end of October.

80. It is essential for the Government to accelerate the deployment of the administration in the north to improve the delivery of basic services, as well as to support initiatives for inter- and intra-community dialogue. In this regard, it is important that the authorities ensure the expeditious restoration of the rule of law and justice in the northern regions. In turn, this will facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and their reintegration into their communities without fear of reprisal, as well as promote social cohesion and respect for human rights.

81. While the situation is improving in the north, it is important to bear in mind that the crisis has affected all Malians, including those living in the southern part of the country. There is an ongoing food crisis, affecting more than 800,000 people, which needs urgently to be addressed. I appeal to the international community to help alleviate the suffering of the affected populations.

82. The inability of the national authorities to effectively address the chronic humanitarian crisis is a further reminder of the systemic weaknesses that have debilitated the Malian State and Government in recent years. The challenges are significant, and the population is eager to reap peace dividends. As the international community anticipates the successful completion of the electoral process, I call upon President Keita and his cabinet to address, as a matter of priority, critical governance challenges that would enable the State to resume effective functioning. These include institutional and security sector reforms, national dialogue, and reconciliation and justice. Equally important is the fight against corruption and organized crime and the need to strengthen accountability mechanisms. In turn, those measures would help to facilitate the disbursement of pledges made at the donors' conference held in May in Brussels, which is urgently needed to launch recovery and development programmes. In addition to longer-term programmes, early recovery activities are crucial in order for Malians to benefit from tangible peace dividends.

83. As the country moves forward, Malian actors and the international community need to reassess their relationship in order to address the problems that contributed to the crisis. I encourage international partners to establish, in consultation with the Malian authorities, a "new deal" that would ensure accountability while respecting national sovereignty.

84. The challenges facing the Sahel region are numerous. As we focus on supporting the stabilization of Mali, we must remain aware of the vulnerabilities of neighbouring countries. The Sahel region can be stabilized only through concerted national, regional and international efforts. In this regard, I reiterate my call to national, regional and international actors to support the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

85. In closing, I commend the Malian people and the authorities for their determination to restore constitutional order and national cohesion. I would like to express my appreciation to my Special Representative, Albert Gerard Koenders, for his leadership and steadfast support to Malians at this critical juncture. I would also like to extend my appreciation to bilateral partners and regional and multilateral organizations, in particular the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the United Nations country team and non-governmental organizations, for their work in support of the people of Mali.